

Amendments to the Claims

Please amend Claims 2-3, 5, 8-11, and 14-15. The Claim Listing below will replace all prior versions of the claims in the application:

Claim Listing

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Currently Amended) The forelimb brace device of claim [[4]] 14 further comprising:
an inner support layer integrated in combination with the inner surface of said distal support shell.
3. (Currently Amended) The forelimb brace device as in claim [[4]] 14 or 2 further comprising:
an inner support layer integrated in combination with the inner surface of said proximal support shell.
4. (Previously Presented) A forelimb brace device for protecting the fingers, hand, wrist, and forearm of a user from impact injuries, comprising:
a proximal support shell;
a distal support shell;
a finger retention strap integrated in combination with said distal support shell;
an MCP joint subassembly that interconnects said proximal support shell and said distal support shell to permit pivotal movement between said proximal support shell and said distal support shell;
an adjustable forearm anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell and adjustable in tension to secure said forelimb brace device against the forearm of the user;
an adjustable wrist anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell and adjustable in tension to secure said forelimb brace device

against the wrist of the user; and

an adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell, said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism including a palmar grip for positioning the fingers and hand of the user, said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism being adjustable in tension to secure the hand and wrist in said forelimb brace device;

wherein interactive cooperation among said MCP joint subassembly, said adjustable forearm anchor mechanism, said adjustable wrist anchoring mechanism, and said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism immobilizes the wrist of the user in a predetermined flexion position.

5. (Currently Amended) The A forelimb brace device of claim 4 wherein for protecting the fingers, hands, wrist, and forearm of a user from impact injuries, comprising:

a proximal support shell;

a distal support shell;

an MCP joint subassembly that interconnects said proximal support shell and said distal support shell to permit pivotal movement between said proximal support shell and said distal support shell;

an adjustable forearm anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell and adjustable in tension to secure said forelimb brace device against the forearm of the user;

an adjustable wrist anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell and adjustable in tension to secure said forelimb brace device against the wrist of the user; and

an adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell, said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism including a palmar grip for positioning the fingers and hand of the user, said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism being adjustable in tension to secure the hand and wrist in said forelimb brace device; said adjustable palmar-grip mechanism comprises: comprising a strap means integrated in combination with said

palmar grip[[]] and a ratchet assembly affixed to the dorsal surface of said proximal support shell in a specified orientation with respect to the centerline thereof and integrated in combination with said strap means for movement therebetween; ~~wherein~~ said ratchet assembly [is] being operative to cause movement of said strap means wherein tension is applied to said strap means and said palmar grip in combination therewith;

wherein interactive cooperation among said MCP joint subassembly, said adjustable forearm anchor mechanism, said adjustable wrist anchoring mechanism, and said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism immobilizes the wrist of the user in a predetermined flexion position.

6. (Original) The forelimb brace device of claim 5 wherein said strap means is integrated in combination with said proximal support shell by means of a retaining ring; and wherein the specified orientation of said affixed ratchet assembly is diagonal with respect to the centerline of said proximal support shell.
7. (Original) The forelimb brace device of claim 5 wherein the specified orientation of said affixed ratchet assembly is along the centerline of said proximal support shell.
8. (Currently Amended) The forelimb brace device of claim [4] 14 wherein said MCP joint subassembly further comprises:
 - a proximal stop structure associated with said proximal support shell; and
 - a distal stop structure associated with said distal support shell;
 - wherein abutting engagement between said proximal stop structure and said distal stop structure limits the pivotal movement between said proximal support shell and said distal support shell.
9. (Currently Amended) The forelimb brace device of claim [4] 14 wherein said adjustable forearm anchoring mechanism comprises:
 - a retaining ring affixed to one lateral surface of said proximal support shell; and

a hook and loop fastener strap having one end thereof affixed to the other lateral surface of said proximal support surface;

wherein said hook and loop fastener strap is integrated in combination with said retaining ring such that the other end thereof can be manipulated by the user to apply tension to said hook and loop fastener strap to secure said forelimb brace device against the forearm of the user.

10. (Currently Amended) The forelimb brace device of claim ~~[[4]]~~ 14 wherein said adjustable forearm anchoring mechanism comprises:

a buckle integrated in combination with one lateral surface of said proximal support shell; and

a belt means affixed to the other lateral surface of said proximal support shell;

wherein said belt means and said buckle are integrated in combination by the user to apply tension to said belt means to secure said forelimb brace device against the forearm of the user.

11. (Currently Amended) ~~The~~ A forelimb brace device ~~of claim 4 wherein~~ for protecting the fingers, hand, wrist, and forearm of a user from impact injuries, comprising:

a proximal support shell;

a distal support shell;

an MCP joint subassembly that interconnects said proximal support shell and said distal support shell to permit pivotal movement between said proximal support shell and said distal support shell;

an adjustable forearm anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell and adjustable in tension to secure said forelimb brace device against the forearm of the user; said adjustable forearm anchoring mechanism comprises: comprising a ratchet buckle integrated in combination with one lateral surface of said proximal support shell[[:]] and a strap means having one end thereof affixed to the other lateral surface of said proximal support means and the other end thereof integrated in

combination with said ratchet buckle; ~~wherein~~ said ratchet buckle [[is]] being operative to cause movement of said strap means wherein tension is applied to said strap means to secure said forelimb brace device against the forearm of the user;

an adjustable wrist anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell and adjustable in tension to secure said forelimb brace device against the wrist of the user; and

an adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell, said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism including a palmar grip for positioning the fingers and hand of the user, said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism being adjustable in tension to secure the hand and wrist in said forelimb brace device;

wherein interactive cooperation among said MCP joint subassembly, said adjustable forearm anchor mechanism, said adjustable wrist anchoring mechanism, and said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism immobilizes the wrist of the user in a predetermined flexion position.

12. (Previously Presented) The forelimb brace device of claim 4 wherein said adjustable wrist anchoring mechanism comprises:

a retaining ring affixed to one lateral surface of said proximal support shell; and
a hook and loop fastener strap having one end thereof affixed to the other lateral surface of said proximal support surface;

wherein said hook and loop fastener strap is integrated in combination with said retaining ring such that the other end thereof can be manipulated by the user to apply tension to said hook and loop fastener strap to secure said forelimb brace device against the wrist of the user.

13. (Previously Presented) The forelimb brace device of claim 4 wherein said adjustable wrist anchoring mechanism comprises:

a buckle integrated in combination with one lateral surface of said proximal support shell; and

a belt means affixed to the other lateral surface of said proximal support shell;

wherein said belt means and said buckle are integrated in combination by the user to apply tension to said belt means to secure said forelimb brace device against the wrist of the user.

14. (Currently Amended) ~~The~~ A forelimb brace device of claim 4 ~~wherein~~ for protecting the fingers, hand, wrist, and forearm of a user from impact injuries, comprising:

a proximal support shell;

a distal support shell;

an MCP joint subassembly that interconnects said proximal support shell and said distal support shell to permit pivotal movement between said proximal support shell and said distal support shell;

an adjustable forearm anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell and adjustable in tension to secure said forelimb brace device against the forearm of the user;

and an adjustable wrist anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell and adjustable in tension to secure said forelimb brace device against the wrist of the user, said adjustable wrist anchoring mechanism ~~comprises~~ comprising a ratchet buckle integrated in combination with one lateral surface of said proximal support shell~~[[;]]~~ and a strap means having one end thereof affixed to the other lateral surface of said proximal support means and the other end thereof integrated in combination with said ratchet buckle; ~~wherein~~ said ratchet buckle ~~[[is]]~~ being operative to cause movement of said strap means wherein tension is applied to said strap means to secure said forelimb brace device against the wrist of the user; and

an adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism integrated in combination with said proximal support shell, said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism including a palmar grip for positioning the fingers and hand of the user, said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism being adjustable in tension to secure the hand and wrist in said forelimb brace device;

wherein interactive cooperation among said MCP joint subassembly, said

adjustable forearm anchor mechanism, said adjustable wrist anchoring mechanism, and said adjustable palmar-grip anchoring mechanism immobilizes the wrist of the user in a predetermined flexion position.

15. (Currently Amended) The forelimb brace device of claim [[4]] 14 wherein said MCP joint subassembly for interconnecting said proximal support shell and said distal support shell comprises:

spaced-apart proximal joint housings associated with said proximal support shell;
spaced-apart distal joint housings associated with said distal support shell, said spaced-apart distal joint housings corresponding in number and opposed relation to said spaced-apart proximal joint housings; and

a resilient member integrated in combination with opposed ones of said spaced-apart proximal and distal joint housings;

wherein said resilient members facilitate pivotal movement between said proximal support shell and said distal support shell.